

A Page of History

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PROFESSOR OF HISTORY



DELIVERED AT THE REGINA COLLEGIATE INSTITUTE BEFORE
THE ARTS, LITERARY AND SCIENCE ASSOCIATION OF REGINA

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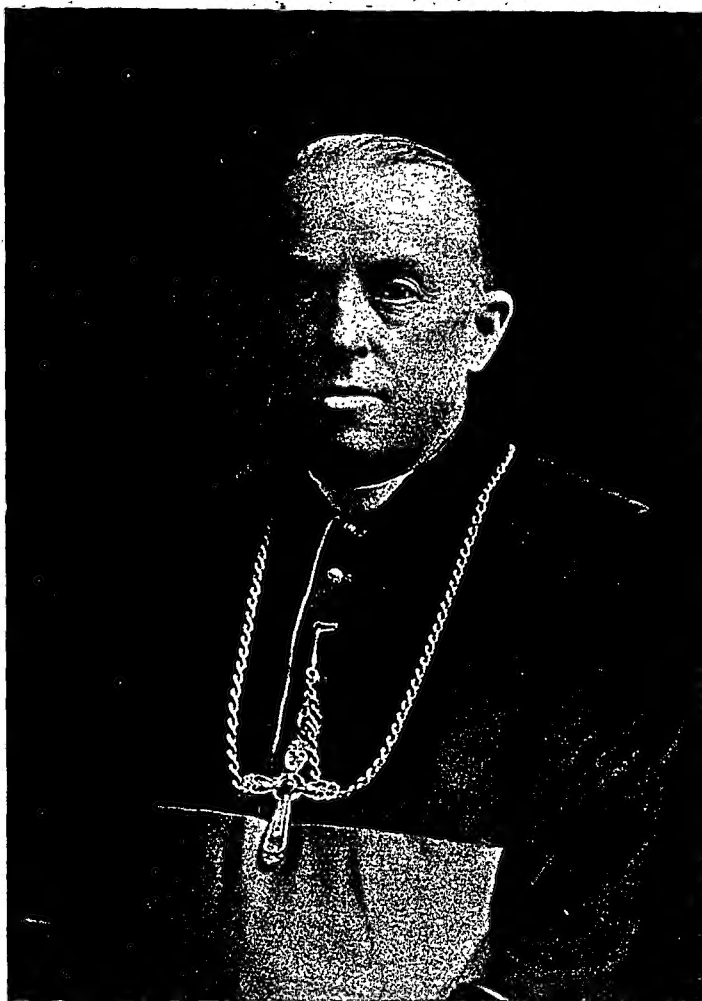
BY RIGHT REV. O. E. MATHIEU, D.D.
BISHOP OF REGINA

Montarville

B. de LaBrière

1913

Delivered at the Regina Collegiate Institute before
the Arts, Literary and Science Association of Regina



RIGHT REV. O. E. MATHIEU, D.D.
BISHOP OF REGINA



Right Reverend Bishop Mathieu



NOT only the Roman Catholics but the whole Province of Saskatchewan is proud to have numbered among its citizens one of such renown as the Right Reverend Olivier Elzéar Mathieu, M. A., D. D., C. M. G., the first Bishop of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Regina. As an educationist and a moulder of minds, His Lordship gained the confidence and love of the hundreds of students who were sent to him for their training in Laval University, Quebec.

Loved and revered by his flock in this province he also commands the respect of the non-catholics who have had the pleasure of his acquaintance. Bishop Mathieu is a man among men. None who have visited him at the Palace but have been made to feel that they were discoursing with a life long friend. None, whether rich or poor, but have received from him the same kindly words and advice in times of trouble whether spiritual or temporal. Honored by the King of England and the President of France, His Lordship is thoroughly democratic. Attentive to the interests and wants of those of his own flock, he is nevertheless very kindly towards those not of his own faith. "There is the most broad minded man I ever heard," remarked a prominent non-catholic upon hearing the ecclesiastic deliver a public address. "He is the kind of person we want in this city no matter what faith he professes."

On December 24, 1912, Bishop Mathieu celebrated his fifty-ninth birthday, having been born in Quebec on Christmas Eve, 1853. He completed his classical education at the Quebec Seminary and entered Laval University. From that institution he graduated in 1878 with the degree of Doctor of Theology. On

June 2nd of the same year he was ordained priest by the late Cardinal Taschereau. In the fall of 1878 he was appointed Professor of Philosophy at Laval, later entering the Academy of St. Thomas in Rome, Italy, receiving the degrees of Doctor of Theology and Philosophy in 1852. Returning to Quebec in 1883 he resumed the professorship of Philosophy in Laval until 1899, when he became rector of the University, which post he retained until nominated Bishop of Regina in 1911. In 1899, this distinguished prelate was appointed Director and Prefect of Studies at the Seminary of Quebec, occupying this position for several years.

On the visit of Their Royal Highnesses, the Duke and Duchess of York, the present King and Queen, to Canada in 1901, Bishop Mathieu was created a companion of the Order of St. Michael and St. George. In 1902 Pope Leo XIII took cognizance of his splendid work by further honoring him with the nomination of Apostolic Prothonotary. Still further was our beloved Bishop honored, when the President of the French Republic created him Knight of the Legion of Honour.

His work as an educationist in the Province of Quebec was rewarded by his being appointed an officer of Public Instruction.

Bishop Mathieu, we wish to congratulate you on having attained your fifty-ninth birthday. We readily understand that your efforts in moulding this young diocese into a great Apostolic See are very trying and arduous. We are prepared to assist you in every possible way to attain the end for which you are striving. You have been a true father to us, and as children of Our Holy Mother the Church and your children, we will do our duty towards you at all times. We hope and pray that Our Heavenly Father will permit you to remain with us for many years, that you may complete the work which you have so nobly begun.

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IN ancient times there existed a current family custom quite venerable and touching. Ancestral traditions and the time-honoured practices of olden days were guarded with religious care; forefathers' noble deeds were told and retold; little children, now in their turn grown to be men, loved to delight their own admiring tots with these tales of their ancestors. And so it was that from generation to generation there was handed down a rich treasure of precious memories that served to maintain and to safeguard the noble spirit and generous ideals of those bygone times. It was by so doing that the people then followed the sacred council of the sage: "Laudemus viros gloriosos."

It is, indeed, not without much profit that one looks back now and then to past generations, retracing, as it were, the steps travelled over in ages gone by, to cast a glance upon the great men, who have journeyed before in the way of life, even if to hold but a silent intercourse with them. (The influence is beneficial.) One feels freer; one experiences being lifted up to the summit of some lofty mountain, so to speak, where the air is purer, the horizon more expansive and clearer.

So I should wish, this evening, to open out before you a page or two of the History of England and Canada, for the sake of recalling, and I will disclose it for your admiration, a word-picture of our ancestors, a true portrayal of their conduct, so noble, so worthy of them and thereby so thoroughly Christian. I would be content (and I should deem it an ample reward), could I but impart to you the desire of following in their footsteps.

You have perhaps heard the story: A father, who was sometimes obliged to leave his infant son alone in his cradle, used to give him flowers to play with; they amused and charmed the little one. The child delighted in handling the multi-coloured, sweet scented blossoms. (The incident determined his future career. These first impressions of earliest childhood exercised a slow and mysterious influence that grew and strengthened with years. The child matured; he became a man.. This child, who was wont to fondle the flowers was no other than the illustrious, the immortal Linnæus. Happy would I be if the perfume (if I may call it so) exhaling from the noble souls, whose memory I wish to revive, would penetrate into your hearts, there to lay secret germs (of life), which, under the influence of the warm and fostering rays of reflection, might sprout up to become so many resolutions, so many generous sentiments of mutual benevolence.

The eighteenth century was fast coming to a close. France, blinded by the writings of such men as Voltaire and Rousseau, perverted by the cavils of her so-called philosophers, had denied the Church, driven Jesus from His temples and raised altars to the goddess Reason.

The common people had been reading novels and publications of the most impious and the most pernicious character. Their minds had been saturated with the poisonous teachings of books in which God's name was openly blasphemed and religion attacked and despised, and in which the holiest practices of Christian worship were mocked and ridiculed.

It may perhaps interest you to know what Rousseau thought of the productions of his pen: "I never look at my books," he once confessed, "without fear and trembling. I corrupt instead of instructing; I poison the mind instead of nourishing it. I frankly confess that passion is leading me astray, and, in spite of all my novels and speeches, I am nothing better than a scoundrel." The feverish dream of those days was to

overthrow and destroy. People despised religion, hated it, wished to do away with it; they considered it a mere heap of errors and superstitions, a series of fables quite unbecoming to reasonable men and barring the way to human progress.

And, along with religion, they wished to abolish the whole social state of things, the magistracy and royalty. They wished to free themselves from all public restraint; for all of these bonds had become for them antiquated institutions of corruption and tyranny. Their fury was directed not only against existing abuses, the sadly natural fruit of time and human infirmity. Society itself had to disappear. They were not satisfied with pruning the tree and ridding it of its withered branches, the tree itself had to be rooted up.

The Revolution ignited. Violent men, greedy for plunder and blood, had France at their mercy. The king was beheaded; the nobility decimated; the very executors murdered one another. Like Saturn, the pagan god of old, the revolution was devouring its own children. And meanwhile the honest people remained dumfounded and powerless.

The first to suffer were the bishops. They were despoiled of all their belongings; and the French Parliament House re-echoed with the memorable word of Montlosier addressed to the revolutionist Mirabeau: "You rob them of their golden crosses; they will take wooden ones; for a wooden cross it was that saved the world."

They were called upon to sign the Civil Constitution of the Clergy. In other words, they were asked to deny their Faith and to commit perjury. They unanimously refused.

The Bishop of Agen was the first summoned. He addressed his accusers with these words: "The sacrifice of wealth is little to me, but there is one sacrifice that I will never make; it is the sacrifice of your esteem for me and of my Faith. Now, I would surely lose the one and the other were I to take the oath you require of me."

Bent under the weight of years, the Bishop of Poitiers came in his turn and spoke as follows: "I am

seventy years of age, and of these thirty-five have I spent as a bishop; I will never dishonour my gray hairs, by accepting the oath you demand; I will not take the oath."

The Bishop of Dax followed the first two. "Placed in the alternative," said he, "of either perjuring ourselves or of perishing of hunger, our choice will soon be made. We shall turn our eyes towards eternity; then shall we look upon the grave you have prepared for us. We shall fathom it and measure its depth without emotion."

All the bishops and priests present united in giving their loud approval to such sublime language and to so intrepid a declaration, and Mirabeau, their persecutor, was himself forced to exclaim: "We may deprive them of their property; they shall never forfeit their honour."

All were obliged to go into exile. Without murmuring, without wavering, they undertook the painful journey, which a secret design of Providence bade them make. They knew what sufferings were in store for them, nor were they unaware that many of them would need shed their blood. All left, prepared for and expecting a life of misery. Not only were they resigned to their fate, but they were even joyful; happily did they go, just as the Apostles had gone on before them, "ibant gaudentes," because they had been found worthy to suffer for the sake of Jesus Christ.

But whither should they go? Whither turn their steps? Any nation offered them hospitality.

The most pressing and most cordial invitation came from England. While the spokesman of the Legislative Assembly of Paris ordered them to leave their native land, at that very hour the Honourable Mr. Burke, an Englishman and a Protestant, speaking in the English Parliament House of London, bade them welcome and hailed them with these words: "Pontiffs and Pastors, who have been robbed and banished from your homes, we welcome you; ye, who are the representatives of a religion which has so happily transformed the face of the world, and which has established all the sacred laws of Christian society, we

welcome you, and we bid you come to witness our spirit of tolerance. You have not a moment to lose to escape the certain martyrdom that awaits you in your fatherland."

"And ye also, Daughters of St. Vincent of Paul, angels of Christian charity, who have been driven out of the hospitals, where you were wont to give up your lives in caring for the sick, consoling the dying and burying the dead, come ye to us, to our isle, where we shall endeavour to show you, by our friendly care, the true spirit of our impartiality."

These noble accents, echoes of a still nobler heart, made themselves heard throughout the world, but in France especially, where the hunted clergy did not know whither to turn its steps. The exiles answered the call. Every ship landed hundreds of them at Dover. Those who went over thus to England were men whose lives were spotless and disciplined to self-denial. They had consecrated themselves to God; they had promised to live for Him alone and for the saving of men's souls.

All Englishmen had enough intelligence and nobility of heart to see in these lives of sacrifice, a prey to persecution, truly holy lives, a moral dignity that challenged every other title to greatness, a force of character that surpassed all others. They acknowledged the might and greatness of those, who know how to sacrifice their lives and to die, as being over and above the seeming might and greatness of those others, who seek but to live and be happy.

The entire nation was thrilled (so to speak) with a feeling of compassion and fraternal charity, for they sought with one accord to alleviate such distressing misfortune. It has been said of the English home: "Without the will of the master the wind alone can enter." It was not so, for that time being, at least, the doors of the English home were thrown wide open to the unfortunate ones, and the Englishman understood that in the presence of certain mishaps of fortune it is a shame to live unconcerned and comfortably.

The Government showed itself particularly well disposed, as may be inferred from the following extract taken from a London paper of the time: "Having

heard that French clergymen in large numbers, and among whom are several prelates and laymen, were exposed to imminent danger of death at the hands of their enemies who would have either butchered them without mercy or let them die of cold and hunger or otherwise, the Government has dispatched warships along the coast of the United Provinces to look out for the unfortunate ones and to save as many of them as possible. In fact many have until now escaped death in this way and have been landed on the English shore, where they have received humane and charitable treatment."

The king himself set the example and most worthily. His was true kindness, which, according to Bossuet, must of all others be a prince's chief quality. He placed the royal castle of Winchester at the disposal of the exiles. As many as eight hundred priests lived there together, observing a common discipline and rule as well as in any ecclesiastical school.

The men of Lord Buckingham's regiment, stationed in the vicinity, effected intimate relations of friendship with the exiles. The memoirs of Father Baston recount that this noble lord sent books, lawn-benches, working tools for the garden, two thousand yards of flannel out of which to make clothing for the sufferers. The stocking of the barnyard with live poultry, the installing of invalid chairs and many other objects were due to the generosity of the marchioness. Moreover, this lady visited the sick several times a day. On Fridays she used to buy up all the fresh fish that could be found on the market. She provided tools for those, who were skilled in watch-making, pencils for those among them, who were artists or designers. She organized workshops for embroidery and tapestry making. Not only were the raw materials supplied and the necessary machinery set up, but she even secured instructors who were acquainted with the trades. And afterwards she bought the products and paid a high price for them. The knitting works had scarcely been opened and set in operation when Lord Buckingham ordered six hundred pairs of gloves for his regiment. The income produced in this way,

trifling as it was, enabled the busy exiles to buy new books, linen and clothes.

At that time the Parliament was headed by one of those men upon whom the burden of state affairs is allowed totally to rest, whom all men trust and to whose ability the public weal is securely committed. This man was no other than the illustrious Pitt, who, at the end of his career, merited undisputed honours and the public praise of all—an homage worthily won by and due to his many good qualities. You are all acquainted with this fact of history: When, before both Houses of Parliament united and in the presence of all that England possessed of noble and illustrious men, Pitt's mortal remains were carried down to their last resting place and deposited alongside the tomb of the famous Lord Chatham, his father, the sergeant at arms exclaimed, and his words were sincerely applauded by every one present: "non sibi sed patriae vixit—He did not live for his own but for his country's good."

It was this great minister of England who induced the Government—both Houses of Parliament—to take an active part in the work of assisting the exiled priests. He committed to the Honourable Members Burke, Metcalf and Wilmot, the task of drawing up a form of appeal to be presented to the people of England to solicit them to help the priests, who were (to quote the text) "a prey to cruel and inhuman persecution stirred up against them by a faction of men destitute of principles and of faith, godless men, who called themselves philosophers."

"Several of these priests," continued the address, "are weighed down under the burden of many years and physical ailments. To avoid going to prison or becoming subject to the other evils that menaced them to prevent the utter ruin of their spiritual flocks, whom unprincipled men would doubtlessly have punished because of their adherence to their lawful pastors, these priests have been obliged to flee from their own country and to look for shelter on the territory of Great Britain. They have come and their perfectly edifying conduct has added a great deal to further the

feeling of compassion inspired by their misfortune so totally undeserved.

"It has been proposed that a public subscription be made in their behalf. We cherish the sincere conviction that some variations in matter of religious dogma shall not close the hearts of Englishmen to the sufferings of their brethren, the Christians of France. Indeed, all true children of the Anglican church, all true servants of our Lord Jesus Christ, all who in these days of apostasy and prevarication are not ashamed to confess Jesus Christ, to obey Him, to imitate their Divine Master in lavishing outward marks of the most affectionate charity on their suffering brethren, no matter what their name may be or to what denomination they may belong, indeed all persons who are generous by nature and who cultivate the virtues proper to humanity; all who profess to live for civil and religious liberty and the laws of good order, all such shall deem themselves happy and privileged to have the occasion to alleviate the sufferings of these worthy men, who are now grieving for honour's sake, for the sake of virtue, loyalty and religion."

The leading newspapers of the time, such as the "Courier," the "Public Advertiser," the "Morning Chronicle," the "Times," the "Gentlemen's Magazine," the "Annual Register" published this splendid appeal to the nation's sympathy. A committee was organized and was composed of the most noted men; subscription lists began to circulate; within a few days more than a million of francs had been subscribed, and from 1792 to 1806 England gave to the unfortunate foreigners not less than forty-seven millions of francs.

On this occasion, the king, acting as a church chief, went so far as to publish an edictal notice, ordering all the bishops and churches of his kingdom to announce a general collection in favour of the relief fund.

The royal missive, together with the pastoral letters of the Anglican bishops, enjoining that collections should be made in all the churches of their dioceses and explaining the nature of these collections, all of these documents have been preserved. In perusing them, one is struck by the deep spirit of

fraternity and charity that animates them. From every Anglican and Presbyterian pulpit public praise for the French clergy was proclaimed, for the members of that clergy, who had sacrificed everything for conscience' sake and for the saving of their Faith.

The University of Oxford, after having subscribed twelve hundred francs. to the relief fund, had four thousand copies of the New Testament printed at the expense of the university, the translation being according to the Roman version, with these words for a heading: "To be used by the Catholic Clergy, exiled for religion's sake." This the "Gentlemen's Magazine" commented as follows: "In having these copies of the New Testament printed for the use of the exiled ecclesiastics, the University of Oxford has added another generous gift to a former one already given to those unfortunate ones, whose conduct has never since belied the good opinion first formed about them upon their arrival in this country."

In a letter written in Latin, and carefully prepared, Bishop de la Marge expressed his thanks to the University. This letter was read at an assembly of the board of directors of Oxford.

Private persons vied in generosity with public men and the great institutions of the country.

Sir Thomas Silburne's wife was a most zealous worker. It could be said of this lady what Chateaubriand had said of Madam de Jahouvey: "This woman was a great man," or "this woman had every quality of a great man." No sooner had the Bishop of St. Pol de Leon been introduced to Lady Silburne than she offered him her residence and put it at his disposal.

It was there that the bishop fixed his headquarters and this new abode soon became the home of the exiled priests. Henceforth, all went there upon their arrival in England. It was there that their most pressing needs were attended to. From that time on Madame Silburne had the occasion of meeting several of these priests. Her intercourse with them taught her to love the country of France, and, when later, at the time of the restoration, she left England to reside there; she found that living there was most pleasant. In France

as well as in England this worthy woman continued her charitable work. Later, as she had become the victim of a sad reverse of fortune, Louis XVIII granted her a pension on the civil list. After her death, which occurred the 2nd of October, 1820, the French Government raised a monument to her memory, that should recall and celebrate for future ages the devotedness of this "mother of the exiled priests," of her whom the Breton peasants named "the good Lady."

Father Barruel wrote in his memoirs: "Every time that a ship, laden with French priests, made its appearance off the coast, one could have said in all truth that the very instinct of benevolence had announced the news to the English. On they came, eager to bid us welcome. They vied with one another in offering us lodgings and refreshments. Our hosts seemed more preoccupied about our distressing state than we ourselves. They ceased not to inquire about our needs. They had carriages ready; and while on our way great lords and burghers invited and wished to detain us or paid our expenses at the hostelry."

We could cite a great number of anecdotes, all of which tend to prove the sensitive trait of character in the English people. Bishop de la Marche relates the following one; I take it textually from his notes:

"Some French priests desired to buy provisions from a poor market woman. She gave them what they wanted, but refused to accept any payment. And this she did several times. The priests, seeing that she obstinately refused to accept any money for her merchandise, and not wishing to abuse such liberality, left the woman to do their purchasing elsewhere. The poor lady was inconsolable; she complained that they came no longer to her and just because she would not take their money."

"A few other French clergymen were one day bargaining for provisions, but because the price was too high for their means, they bought nothing and went their way. The good merchant woman, without losing an instant, runs after them, and obliges them to take gratuitously what they had wished to pay her. The Bishop of St. Leon was walking on the street,

accompanied by his Vicar General. Suddenly he feels some person pressing him from behind. He turns about; a milkman had slightly slipped a piece of silver into his hand and was hastening away, not wishing to disclose his identity.

"On one of the subscription lists there was a donation of twenty guineas given by a person, who assumed the pseudonym of 'Misericordia.'" This same person, whose name was never known, had various amounts of money sent to different private persons. All that we know is that the circumstances did not denote this person as being wealthy."

Among the many and varied incidents that took place, the school children should not be forgotten, for they contributed to the relief fund out of their tiny savings of pleasure money.

Nor should this other fact be omitted, namely, that of the Honourable Burke's founding a school for the little French orphans, whom either strife or scaffold had deprived of father or mother. That he might realize this project a pretty house had been given him for the purpose, and to assure the success of this praiseworthy enterprise, Burke had first secured the co-operation of Pitt, the Marquis of Buckingham, the Duke of Portland, and the Lord Chancellor Windham, all of whom were men of influence and publicly known as protectors of the exiles. The Government granted them an annual subsidy of three thousand dollars. Burke chose to superintend the school in person; all of the teachers had to be French and Catholic.

When this new act of pure generosity was made known to Bishop de la Marche, he wrote to the French clergy in England a long letter, which breathes the very expression of deep gratitude which an apostle such as he could feel. I quote his own words: "The welcome that has afforded you such consolation, the protection you now enjoy and which reassures you, the kind treatment you have continually received and which surprises you,—these facts impose a debt of gratitude which you must do your best to pay. Religion gives you the means of doing so. Our God can take it upon Himself to make this people happy, they

who have done so much for us. The cause we honour and uphold by our sufferings and our exile, is it not the cause of God Himself? And did He not assure His disciples that all who would receive them would thereby receive Him also, and He Himself would see to their being rewarded? You have indeed forcible reasons for calling God's blessings down upon your benefactors. Do not be afraid of being called strangers; you are the heirs of misfortune. With such a title as this one the English will not look down upon you as foreigners, but they will treat you rather as brothers. Your great number astounds you; the Englishman notices it without concern. And if it sometimes happens that he congratulate himself upon his having a goodly fortune and riches, it is only to count up the number of those in suffering he can succour."

The king's kindly conduct, the praiseworthy behaviour of his men of state, the manifest charity of the Protestant bishops, the general sympathy of the English people now anew betrayed by handsome gifts of money, were facts that could not long be kept concealed. They were soon known, and especially were they appreciated in Rome. Pius VI, informed of what was going on, addressed the king and his people a letter in which he said: "We have every reason to commend and to praise in a very particular manner the King of England and the English nation, who, moved by a feeling of humanity, have given help to the poor exiles. It redounds to the glory of the English race to have opened their doors to these unfortunate ones, and it is an honour for their nation to have availed itself of such circumstances to show hospitality to strangers."

The illustrious Burke, in a letter made public and addressed to Mr. de Boisgelin, expressed a sentiment which possessed the hearts of his countrymen and had been inspired by the model conduct of the exiled bishops. I quote from this letter: "Your Church has in prosperous times been a light for the Christian world, and this light shines with greater glory even in these times of adverse fortune; such is the opinion of those who are able to judge rightly on the matter."

Never before has such faultless constancy been shown by so great a number of men, such manifest disinterestedness, such magnanimous humility, such dignity in waiting, such nobility in the sentiment of honour. Centuries have not brought forth so many noble examples of virtue as France has produced within the last two years. It were shameful to look back to seek for merit in bygone ages, and to remain unmoved by the facts lying under our very eyes. It is true, France is in a most wretched condition as to its moral and political state, but it seems as though it were a world-wide law of (Divine) economy that wherever the most deplorable vices predominate, even there should there be found the most eminent virtues; the days of mediocrity are past."

Pitt, the Prime Minister of England, speaking as England's chief official, paid this solemn tribute to the French clergy: "Few shall ever forget their piety, the blameless conduct, the long and doleful, patient waiting of those honourable men. Unexpectedly thrown into a strange nation, quite different as to religion, customs, language and manners, they have won the respect and sympathy of all by leading a life of uniform devotion and the most becoming conduct. The country that has received them has been favoured with blessings from on High. While other countries have been disturbed by intestine and public troubles, England has been blessed by Providence and given honour and glory. Peace has reigned in her palaces, her cities have been in abundance, every clime has witnessed the growth and full expansion of her commerce, every sea her victories."

In a sermon preached in London the first of January, 1794, a clergyman pronounced the following words: "Jealous eyes have spied the conduct of those priests. What did they discover? Uniformity of conduct, a constant spirit of meekness, of patience, of piety. They led a life worthy of their sublime vocation, everywhere showed themselves to be faultless ministers of God, never causing scandal; not even did they utter words of complaint against their perse-

cutors. In a word they have been found to be models of patience in their troubles, trials and sorrows."

I thought that you would take pleasure in reading over again with me this beautiful page of England's history. It is now my desire to impress deeply into your minds the knowledge of the real value of the virtue of benevolence (to announce the thesis allegorically) I should like to prove that benevolence is an investment, (a money-scheme of the higher type) that costs little, is easily placed at interest and yields enormous profits. "He who borrows is thereby the richer," this is an axiom of political economy; it does allow room for discussion. But easier to prove is the adage of our forefathers: "He who gives is truly rich."

England had been generous in offering hospitality to the priests expelled from France. Let us now open the history of our own country that we may ascertain what England received in return for this kindness. The memorable pages of Canadian history will show us how it was that French bishops and priests were the real donators of Canada to England, and that if today the English flag floats above this beautiful land of ours it is due to no others than to them.

Without doubt, the king and the statesmen of England were mindful of the noble conduct shown by the Canadian clergy a few years before and of the loyal sentiments manifested by them in spite of the most embarrassing circumstances.

England's benevolence towards the French priests, though, no doubt, an act of true charity promoted by noble innate sentiments, was, nevertheless, in reality an act of gratitude as well for favours already received.

For you are all aware that only a few years after the cession of Canada to England, some Anglo-Saxons from the south took up arms and directed their march on Quebec, with the intention of capturing the city. At that time the population of the colony was almost entirely French. The Americans made a forcible appeal to the people; and tried to win them over to take part in the rebellion that was being prepared against the metropolis, promising as a pretext that

their religious liberty would be better safeguarded by them than it would be by the English. Had the bishops and priests but kept silence, it is likely that all of their faithful subjects would have let themselves be tempted by these flattering promises; they would have been ensnared by the invaders, and the colony would have been lost to the British Crown:

But what did Bishop Briand do? Listen to him speaking to his subjects, who at that time formed the entire population of Canada: "Troops of men, subjects revolting against their legitimate sovereign, who is our sovereign also, have just invaded our province. Solemn oaths and your very religion impose upon you the stringent obligation of defending your King and country, with your life's blood, if need be. Dear Canadian fellowmen, listen not to such proposals, and turn away from these seditious individuals, who seek to stifle in your hearts the law of submission to your superiors, so deeply there imprinted by your education and your religion. Readily and heartily obey every commandment of the governor, whose interests are identified with your own, and whose only desire is your welfare.

All the priests of the different localities received instructions to make these well defined sentiments known to their subjects, and not a single one refused to execute the order. The Governor, Carlton, being informed at Quebec of the enemy's approach, issued a proclamation, ordering all those who did not wish to fight under the British flag to leave the city and to take refuge on the Island of Orleans. Not a single Catholic Frenchman deserted the city; every one of them was faithful to duty—and they fought like lions. After taking Montreal and Three Rivers, the Bostonians were repulsed and completely routed under the walls of Quebec; and Montgomery, their general, was killed at the very foot of the great promontory of the ancient capital.

Notwithstanding, they still wished to conciliate the inhabitants of Canada. They sought to make them their allies. The Americans sent Lafayette and other Frenchmen, thinking that the Canadians

would receive them with open arms and hail them as deliverers. They made new promises; to the people they offered the free exercise of their religion; to the clergy the free possession and administration of Church property, together with the full right of direction in all that concerns religious matters.

In spite of such enticing promises, the people remained docile to its clergy, who bade them be faithful to their legitimate sovereign. After having been repeatedly thwarted in their hopes, the Americans finally retreated, and Bishop Briand caused the "Te Deum" to be chanted as a solemn hymn of thanksgiving.

"It is meet that we should return thanks," said the Bishop, "for it is no other but God Himself who has kept us united and assured the stability of our garrison, composed as it was of men of different callings, of different characters and interests, and who professed different religious beliefs. God it was, who inspired our brave and heroic soldiers with constant courage and with true fidelity to King and duty. All this was indispensable for the enduring of a long and painful siege, throughout one of our bitter and cold Canadian winters."

A few years later, in 1812, war broke out between England and the United States. At the time Bishop Plessis was visiting the more distant parts of his diocese. During his absence, his Vicar General wrote a pastoral letter, inviting the people to be faithful and encouraging them against the enemy. I quote from this letter: "Let all Canadians know well and understand to-day and better still than ever before, that they must keep intact those sentiments of loyalty, which have been theirs until now, and which they have always shown by their conduct that has been irreproachable in this respect . . . what must you do in these doleful circumstances? First of all you must make use of natural resources. The younger men will take up arms to repel an unjust attack; let them march against the enemy at the very first signal of command. Were it needed to arouse their soldier's courage, what motives are not there to excite them on.

We should have but to recall the valour of your forefathers, who were ever ready to fly to arms, ever ready to battle against the king's enemies. They were like the Jews of old, who, so to speak, had one hand on the plow that afforded them the means of living and the other on the sword that was there to defend the native land. You are the sons of these heroes . . .

We would remind you of the valour that is naturally yours; it is in you born and must visibly surge in your veins with the blood of your fathers . . .

Bishop Plessis hastily returned to Quebec. To all of his subjects he immediately wrote a letter, which runs as follows: "It is your duty to stand firm as a wall against the enemy. You must undo their plans. Their position so bold in its assurance will crumble wherever the God of Armies will combat with you. Go thou, and conquer new laurels; march on to the fray as if to victory; honour your reputation of obedient, disciplined, intrepid soldiers; your first successful endeavours have merited this for you. Nor will your confidence be lightly weighed, if, before exposing your life for the defence of your homes and King, if, before all else, you will have made peace with Him, (who giveth you might and glory.)"

It has been related that, before the encounter between the French and the Americans, some one went to the general of the American troops to warn him. "Take care," said the emissary, "these Frenchmen are brave soldiers," "Bah," laughed the general with scorn. "I know those people; they're brought up by their priests; they only know how to pray." The encounter took place and de Salaberry, like another Epaminondas, won a signal victory over an army much more numerous than his own. These Frenchmen did know how to pray and surely they had to know how to pray to fight with lion-like courage under a flag still stained with the blood of their ancestors. They truly had been formed by priests, who had taught them how to respect and defend authority.

After the war of 1812, the bishop was in a position to send a letter to his priests expressing the "entire satisfaction of the Governor with the help they had given

him, both in rallying troops and maintaining subordination among them."

"You know of course," said the good bishop, "how happy I feel in being able to offer you so honorable a testimonial. You have given your parishioners the strongest stimulus, that of religion, to instil noble sentiments into their souls, to enliven their courage, to animate their zeal and loyalty. . . . What spectacle more consoling than this perfect bond of patriotism and piety. . . . But continue to make your ministry a laudable instrument for the shaping of true valiant defenders of our dear country."

Twenty-five years later, in 1837, a few French Canadians, dissatisfied with the harsh treatment they had to endure, let themselves be persuaded by the solicitous appeal of an English doctor, and took up arms. Those who were constituted in authority turned once more to the clergy to seek from them the moral support they needed. It is certain that, if the priests had not fully exerted their influence to check and to direct in the right way the great majority of their subjects, who were preparing for revolt, the consequences would have been much worse.

The priests again followed the direction given them by their bishop, Monsignor Signay. This is the sort of advice the holy bishop gave to all of his subjects: "You are aware, my dear brethren," said he, "that men, blinded by a false sense of patriotism, have tried to introduce into this country doctrines that favour insubordination. . . . No doubt, these doctrines—and we are happy to note the fact—have seduced and won over but few adherents in this diocese and the very large majority of the faithful have shown themselves ever true and loyal to the government. . . .

"To seek a remedy for existing evils, whether these be real or imaginary in legal and constitutional methods of *procedurè*, is a right we do not pretend to deny any one; but, if to bring about a right ordering of things, revolt is to be used, we declare such a method not only to the useless, imprudent, and a sure source of mishap for those who take part in it, but also criminal in the sight of God and our holy religion. Under the

pretext of doing away with an evil, such procedure would be apt but to fathom an abyss of irreparable woes.

"We hope, therefore, that you will lend a ready ear to our exhortation and to that of our co-labourers in the sacred Ministry; that you will consider more fully the dreadful consequences sure to follow a civil war—dreadful consequences for our dear country. And that, you will, without forsaking your political privileges, endeavour to show, both by word and example, that you are still truly possessed of those sentiments of loyalty and fidelity to the Government of Great Britain—these sentiments your fathers have bequeathed as a precious inheritance to you and they have given proof of them time and again at the cost of their lives."

On many other occasions too, the leaders of the Home Government thought it wiser to use the influence of the Catholic clergy, when important questions and interests were at stake.

Let me recall but this fact. When the Confederation was about to be established in 1867, the people of the Province of Quebec were not favourable to the project. They feared that a majority, which might eventually become blinded by prejudice, might ill-treat them. Then it was that the Catholic Hierarchy interfered and asked the Province of Quebec to accept the Convention proposed.

Better than I do you know to what authoritative power the Canadian Government addressed itself in 1870, to put an end to the Rebellion of the Northwest. Archbishop Tache, of St. Boniface, who was in Rome at the time, was sent for. This holy bishop left the Ecumenical Council and returned immediately to help restore order and peace.

The above facts show how fitting were the words pronounced by one of our former Prime Ministers, Sir John Thompson, at a banquet held in Ottawa, in honour of the English delegates, who had come to assist at the Inter-Colonial Congress. "I would leave a duty unfulfilled," said he, "were I to let this occasion pass by without rendering public homage to the loyalty of the French Canadians. If it had not

been for the devotedness, the heroism and the loyalty of the French race in this country, Canada would not be to-day, staunch in their faith, loyal to their princes; they have set the foundation of civilisation in all parts of America. From the shores of the Atlantic to the coast of the Pacific, their passage has been marked with heroic and memorable deeds, and there is not a nation in the world over that can boast of a nobler or more glorious past."

The best pages of our history are in fact those that speak of the patriotism and loyalty of these French Canadians, who had the good sense to let themselves be guided by their clergy, whom they knew were men of learning and devoted to their interests.

This spirit of loyalty that has always thrilled in the hearts of the French in Canada, due, thanks to God, to the education they receive from their priests, this spirit of loyalty of theirs is recognized in England.

A few years ago one of the mother country's most illustrious sons, when on the point of leaving England to come to Canada, made the following remark to Edward VII before departing: "I am going to Canada. Upon my return I will tell you what one must think of the loyalty of the French who live there." The king smiled at these words and answered: Do not lose your time trying to find it out; I am acquainted with those subjects of mine. So long as they continue to live under the guidance of their priests they will ever be, as they have been in the past, the best subjects of the Empire."

Three years ago I expressed the same truth to the actual king. When I told him that he could always rely upon the loyalty of the inhabitants of the Province of Quebec, he asked me why it was so. And I answered: "It is because we have here a population most Christian and most religious, and citizens who respect and love their God, respect also and love their king."

This has ever been the case. You may remember the story of that emperor of ancient Rome who wanted to make the Christians apostatize. The greater number had refused to offer incense before the idols, but a few among them, considering and fearing the torments

they would have to endure, cowardly consented. But the emperor commanded these to be executed; "For," said he, "he who is not faithful to his God will never be faithful to his king."

Is it not worth our while to cultivate this fidelity to God? To work in spreading it round about us? For this practice will lead us truly to love our country and to make others love it to.

Besides, our common country is worthy of our admiration. You are perhaps acquainted with the words of Mr. de Vogue, a noted French writer of the last century: "When on judgment day the human race, assembled in the valley of Josephat, will receive this question: 'who are those who have best governed the world and given to man the highest legitimate pride of his earthly condition?' I do think that the dead of old England will be the first to rise."

Also must we bear in mind that loving one's country does not necessarily mean that one must take up arms for her defence as our fathers did. Times of striving, and struggling, times of crises, are exceptional—but loving one's country means also the desire to see her glorious and happy and the effort to make her so. Every one has his particular part to play and, while trying to provide the necessities of life for himself and for his dear ones, no one is allowed even then to disregard, to leave undone whatever trifling thing he may do for the public good.

A notable standing in the opinion of the public is oftentimes playing a role in state affairs, more commonly taking up arms and waging war. Generally we give too large a share of our esteem to mighty conquerors, who destroy all before them, leaving but ruin and blood-stained traces in their wake. Truly great men are not destroyers, but builders. They are not those who carry death into populated cities but those rather who bring life to isolated desert lands. Nor does religion belie the truth when chanting, "How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings and that preacheth peace . . ."

No matter how obscure a position one may fill,

there, where Providence has placed him, each one is bound to perform his duty. Whatever good there may be hidden away within oneself, it will radiate round about him; his honesty, his trueness to principles, his firmness of character, his solidity of judgment, so many (different) elements that constitute human dignity and lie latent there in us, given by God to help forward public well-being.

If these qualities are our own we shall live in most perfect harmony, we shall understand that we are born not to hate but to love one another and united will we labour for the advancement and progress of our common country.

Let us use an example; the analogy will make it true: How different and varied are the members of the human body. Still, the same identical purpose circulates through them all, the selfsame soul gives them life, they all succour one another.

Let our prayer be that it will always be so in this our dear land of Canada. Let there be but one moral body. We are, so to speak, but members one of another. May one affection unite our hearts in a single heart; may the same devoted zeal animate each one to do good to his neighbor; let the rich warm blood run through the whole body; for each and every one let the treasure of happiness be found in this Christian union.

This is a wish, the realization of which can most powerfully contribute to the welfare of the Canadian nation, to which we can never award too much of our love; in the first place because here we enjoy most perfect liberty. England has in fact recognized this undoubted principle, proclaimed in the last century by Charles James Fox, that is, that the only means possible of keeping Britain's colonies united is to give them self government; and secondly, because our country is beautiful, so charming in its beauty that it recalls the cry of admiration sprung from the lips of Bishop de Segur after a visit to Naples: "O my God, how pleasing will the abode of your children be, how charming their heavenly home, if this their land of exile is even now so beautiful!"

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